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GIANT-SIZED ANNUAL

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

Fantastic Four

THE FEARSOME FATE OF FRANKLIN RICHARDS---

---AT THE HANDS OF DOCTOR DOOM!

FRENZ-MILGROM

THE FABULOUS F.F. FACE THE GREATEST SHOCK SURPRISE OF THEIR CAREER AS Stan Lee presents

DOUBLE DOUBLE DOUBLE

DOCTOR DOOM HAS JUST SPOKEN! REED RICHARDS CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE'S HEARD!*

YOU WANT ME-- TO ENTRUST YOU WITH THE LIFE OF MY SON?!!

LEMME AT 'IM!

A DOUBLE-SIZED GIFT OF THE SEASON, FROM...

STAINLESS STEVE ENGLEHART STORY
POMMY PAUL NEARY PENCILS
TITANIC TONY DEZUNIGA INKS
ROCKIN' RICK PARKER LETTERS
JOVIAL JOHN WELLINGTON COLORS
RAGING RALF MACCHIO EDITOR
J JONAH JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF

* THESE EVENTS ARE DIRECTLY PRECEDED BY THOSE IN F.F. # 305 ~ RALF.

SCENE: THE FF'S NEW HQ IN FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA, MIDTOWN, NEW YORK...

WAIT, BEN!

JOHNNY! ZIP UPSTAIRS AND SEE IF OUR SON FRANK'S ALL RIGHT!

YOU GOT IT, BROTHER-IN-LAW!

DOC DOOM--OUR MOST UNRELENTING ENEMY! BUT EVEN HE--

...

--WOULDN'T HURT A FOUR-YEAR-OLD--

THE DEFENSE LATTICE OPENS MOMENTARILY TO LET THE HUMAN TORCH PASS THROUGH--!

--WOULD HE--?

NO!

FRANK'S OKAY!

HOW IS HE, JOHNNY?

NO PROBLEMS, REED! AND AS LONG AS HIS UNCLE'S WITH 'IM, IT'S GONNA STAY THAT WAY!

YOU DEAL WITH DOOM-- I'LL WATCH FROM UP HERE!

ALL RIGHT, VON DOOM-- YOU KNOW I'D NEVER TRUST YOU WITH ANYTHING I HOLD DEAR--!

NATURALLY, I KNOW THAT SHOULD NORMALLY BE THE CASE! THE CONFLICT BETWEEN US IS DESTINY! OUR WORLD VIEWS ARE TOO OPPOSED FOR US EVER TO PEACEFULLY CO-EXIST--

--BUT BENEATH OUR WORLD VIEWS, WE ARE MORTAL MEN-- AND I COME TO YOU NOW NOT AS MONARCH OF LATVERIA--

--BUT AS A MAN!

MEN ARE BORN OF WOMEN, RICHARDS! YOU WERE --I WAS! MY MOTHER WAS A GYPSY WITCH--

--WHO DIED WHILE ENGAGED IN RITES IGNORANT MEN CALL UNHOLY!

HER SOUL WAS FORFEIT TO THE NETHER REALMS!

EVERY YEAR ON MIDSUMMER'S EVE-- THIS YEAR, *TONIGHT*-- I BATTLE *MEPHISTO*, THE LORD OF EVIL, TO RECLAIM HER *SOUL!* *

EACH YEAR I *FAIL!*

YES, *FAIL!* AND I TELL YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, THIS, BECAUSE I KNOW NOW I NEED AN *ALLY!*

I NEED ONE WITH *GREAT POWER!*

I NEED *FRANKLIN RICHARDS!*

*SEE ASTONISHING TALES # 8, -FANTASTI-RALF

SUE RICHARDS--

I SYMPATHIZE WITH YOUR *PLIGHT*, DOCTOR, BUT GIVING YOU OUR SON WOULD BE *INSANE!*

BEN GRIMM--

FER *ANY* REASON! AN' *ESPECIALLY* TO FIGHT *MEPHISTO!*

CRYSTAL--

I REJOINED THE FF TO LIVE *LIFE*--

--NOT WITNESS *MURDER!*

JOHNNY STORM--

REED 'N' SUE ARE ABOUT TO TAKE THIS KID *AWAY* FROM THIS KINDA LIFE ALTOGETH-ER--!

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FRANK'S *POWER?*

REED! YOU'RE NOT CONSIDER-ING HIS IDEA?

ANSWER MY *QUESTION*, VON DOOM!

GLADLY!

I KNOW THAT YOUR SON CAN PEER INTO THE *FUTURE* IN HIS DREAMS--

--THAT HE CREATES *ALTERNATE BODIES* FOR HIMSELF, WHICH FUNCTION LIKE HIS OWN IN *ALTERNATE ENVIRONMENTS*--

--SUCH AS THE WORLD OF THE SN^RK!*

I KNOW THAT HE HAS SEEMINGLY *BEATEN* MEPHISTO WITH THE POWER IN HIS *BRAIN*!**

I HAVE SPENT MUCH TIME SINCE I RETURNED TO MY TRUE BODY--STUDYING HIS *POTENTIAL*--

* *POWER PACK* #24-25.--R.M.

** *FF* #277, *FF* #298.

"THAT'S *ENOUGH*! STAY AWAY FROM MY SON, NOW AND *FOREVER*, OR I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE *CONSEQUENCES*!"

I'VE SEEN HOW YOU CARE FOR THE WELFARE OF *CHILDREN*--WITH POOR BRAINWASHED *KRISTOFF*!

KRISTOFF WAS A CONTINGENCY PLAN, TO PROVIDE FOR MY COUNTRY IN THE EVENT OF MY *DEATH*-- A PERSON OVER WHOSE PERSONALITY I LAID MY *OWN!* HE WAS ACTIVATED, OBVIOUSLY, IN *ERROR**-- AND IS NOW *SUPERFLUOUS!*

FF #278.

I AM INTERESTED ONLY IN THE CHILD I *NEED*-- AND I ASK FOR HIM ONE *FINAL* TIME!

I GIVE YOU MY SOLEMN OATH THAT I WILL SACRIFICE *MYSELF* BEFORE I ALLOW HIM TO COME TO ANY HARM!

LEAVE BEFORE YOU'RE CARRIED OUT!

VERY WELL!

LADIES--!

WE SHALL RETURN TO THE EMBASSY, BELA!

AS YOU COMMAND, EXCELLENCY!

THAT *GUY*--! COULD HE REALLY'A THOUGHT YA'D DO IT?!

IMPOSSIBLE, BEN! BUT THAT *OATH* HE OFFERED-- SOMETHING ABOUT IT BOTHERS ME--!

MORE AND MORE, OUR ENEMIES ARE TRYING TO STRIKE AT US THROUGH *FRANKLIN!* WE HAVE TO STOP THAT, REED!

THAT'S WHAT I'M HERE TO HELP YOU TWO *DO!*

HEY, REED!

LOOK UP!

DOOM! HE FAILED AT DIPLOMACY, SO NOW HE TURNS TO WAR!

I KNEW IT COULDN'T END THAT QUIETLY!

HIS VISIT WAS ONLY TO DECOY US!

THE ELEMENTAL, THE THING, AND THE INVISIBLE WOMAN SPRINT FOR THE HIGH-SPEED ELEVATOR--

--BUT MR. FANTASTIC BEATS THEM UPSTAIRS BY STRETCHING THROUGH THE SHAFT HE DESIGNED FOR HIMSELF!

THERE! DEFENSE SHIELDS ON MAXIMUM!

NOW, FRANK--!

FRANK IT'S ALL RIGHT!

MORE'N THAT, DADDY! IT'S NEAT!

THE ATTACK'S SLOWING DOWN, REED! THE SHIELDS ARE DOIN' THEIR JOB!

AND WHAT A JOB! DOOM'S THROWIN' MORE AND BETTER STUFF AT US THAN I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE!

I HAD ALL OUR YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TO DRAW ON WHEN I DESIGNED OUR NEW DEFENSES!

BUT DOOM WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT! HE WOULD HAVE--

LOOK AT THIS!

IT'S A *TAU NEUTRINO* BOMB, PROBABLY WITH A POSITRON OVERSHELL!

GOT TO ADJUST THE *SHIELD*--!

I JUST REALIZED, PER THE FIRST TIME-- WHEN HE'S *GONE*, WE'RE GONNA BE A REAL DIFFERENT TEAM--!

HEY, STRETCH-- DON'T STOP TA TUNE IN "*WHEEL O' FORTUNE*"!

THAT BABY'S STARTIN' TA *GLOW*!

IT'S *TRANSMUTING* THE NEUTRINOS IN *NEGATIVE TIME*, BEN!

DOES THAT MEAN WHUT I *THINK* IT DOES--?

WHOMP!

YEP!

KAROOM!

IT DOES!!

ALL SHIELDS ARE DOWN!

THE SWARM-BOTS ARE BACK!

IT'S UP TO US NOW!

JOHNNY! GET UP! TAKE THE BATTLE INTO THE AIR OUTSIDE!

ON--ON MY WAY, REED!

SUE! USE YOUR FULL POWER AGAINST THE ATTACKERS-- I'LL GUARD FRANK!

I'VE NEVER SEEN REED SO INTENSE-- SO DRIVEN--!

IT WAS ALL I COULD [redacted] TO PROTECT US FROM THE BOMB BLAST, DARLING--

--BUT THESE SHOULD [redacted] EASIER!

I'LL FORCE THEM BACK OUTSIDE WITH MY SHIELD!

AN' THAT GIVES [redacted] AN IDEA, SUZIE!

NO, BEN! NOT YET!

I SEE WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING, BUT LET THE OTHERS *SET THEM UP* FIRST!

SOME OF THEM ARE GETTING *THROUGH*, CRYSTAL!

NO PROBLEM, SUE! IF YOU FORCE THEM INTO THE SAME GENERAL *AREA*, I CAN USE MY POWER OVER *FIRE*--

--TO MAKE THEIR JETS FLARE AND *CONSUME* THEM!

JUST DON'T POINT THOSE HANDS AT *ME*, LADY!

I'VE GOT ENOUGH TROUBLES WITHOUT INCLUDING *YOU!*

WHAT--?

NOW, BEN!

THERE ARE ENOUGH *DEAD* ONES!

YEAH! I CAN *USE 'EM* TA BLOCK OUT THE *LIVE* ONES!

THE POWER ■ MY HANDS CAN AFFECT *EARTH*, TOO, BEN-- SO I'LL *HELP* YOU PUSH!

YOWZA! OUT THE *WINDOW* WITH 'EM--

-- AND WHEN THE *OTHERS* PILE UP *AGAINST* 'EM, THE *HUMAN TORCH'LL* HAVE 'EM RIGHT WHERE HE *WANTS* 'EM!

IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE POWER OF FIRE, CRYSTAL--

--WATCH THIS!

SO MUCH FOR THE HERD!

THAT LEAVES JUST A FEW STRAYS OUT HERE--!

AND A FEW MORE INSIDE!

HEY! YA KNOW WHAT?

WE BEAT 'EM! WE BEAT DOOM!

"WAR IS JUST DIPLOMACY AFTER ANOTHER MANNER," THEY SAY-- AND DOOM [redacted]LED AT BOTH!

AND SO IT WOULD SEEM--

--BUT AMIDST THE DEBRIS--

--ONE OF THE SHATTERED SWARMBOTS MOVES!

UNSEEN, IT CRAWLS ACROSS THE RUBBLE TOWARD A SECOND WRECK--

--AND THEN A THIRD--

--ADDING PARTS AS IT GOES--

--UNTIL SOMETHING TOTALLY NEW--SOMETHING HIDDEN IN THE DESIGNS OF THE ATTACK ROBOTS--

--EMERGES TO SERVE DOCTOR DOOM...!

DOOM DOES KNOW THE FANTASTIC FOUR WELL! HE KNOWS THAT ALTHOUGH THEY ARE TENACIOUS FIGHTERS, THEY ARE PEACEFUL BY NATURE--

--THAT THEIR MAIN CONCERNS IN LIFE REVOLVE NOT AROUND POWER, BUT AROUND PEOPLE!

HE KNOWS THAT INSTEAD OF PLANNING REVENGE, THEY WILL TALK AMONG THEMSELVES NOW, AS FRIENDS DO--TALK AS THEY DID BEFORE HE ATTACKED THEM--*

*IN OUR PREVIOUS STORY, FF #305 -- RALF-BOT.

--AND HE IS COUNTING ON THAT--!

DOCTOR DOOM KNOWS BETTER!

DOCTOR DOOM WORKS ALONE AND TALKS TO NO ONE!

THUS--

--DOCTOR DOOM WINS!

REED!

GRAB IT!

MOMMY!

REED!

CAN'T *REACH* IT--!

TOO *FAST*--!

NOT FOR *ME*!

FRANK'S *PASSED OUT*--!

YOU'RE *POND SCUM*, DOOM! WHETHER YOU CAN HEAR ME OR *NOT*--

--YOU'RE *POND SCUM*!!

MANEUVERS LIKE A *MASERATI*--

--BUT IT'S A *LONG WAY* TO LATVERIA! I'LL CATCH IT--

--WAIT! THAT *SHIP*--!

DOOM!

REED RICHARDS SHOULD HAVE *ACCEPTED* MY OFFER, JOHN STORM! IF HE *HAD*, I WOULD HAVE HONORED MY *OATH* TO PUT THE CHILD'S LIFE AHEAD OF MY *OWN*!

VICTOR VON DOOM IS A MAN OF *STAINLESS HONOR*!

BUT AS IT *IS*--

-- THE CHILD MUST TAKE HIS *CHANCES*!

YOU'LL HAVE TO *ESCAPE* ME *FIRST*!

DONE!

BLAST HIM BLAST HIM ALL TO--

THE ROBOT!

GOT IT!

DUNNO WHAT GOOD IT'LL DO, BUT MAYBE REED CAN GET A CLUE OUT OF IT!

BUT--

SLAM!

IT'S A ROBOT, JOHNNY! WHAT GOOD DOES THAT DO?!

OUR PROBLEM'S DOOM!

DARLING, HE WAS DOING HIS BEST!

DON'T PANIC, STRETCHO. WE'LL GET THE LITTLE GUY BACK--!

SUE AND I WERE GOING TO DEVOTE OUR FULL ATTENTION TO FRANK, BEN-- AS SOON AS YOU PUT TOGETHER A NEW TEAM.

IF YOU'D PICKED A FOURTH MEMBER BY NOW--

HEY! THAT AIN'T FAIR!

YA NEVER PUT NO *TIME LIMIT* ON IT! AN' DON'T TELL ME [redacted] DIDN'T *ALL* DO OUR [redacted] 'CAUSE YOU AIN'T THE *BOSS* [redacted] MORE!

BUT YOU ARE!

YOU'RE A FINE ONE TO TALK ABOUT "*FAME*," BEN-- WHEN YOUR ONE CHOICE FOR MEMBERSHIP SO *FAR* WAS CRYSTAL!

SO *JOHNNY* FINDS MY PRESENCE AS [redacted] AS HIS [redacted] DOES!

BOTH OF THEM-- WORRIED THAT HAVING HIS *FIRST LOVE* AROUND MIGHT HURT HIS NEW *MARRIAGE*!

STOP IT, YOU THREE!

I NEVER EVEN *CONSID-ERED*--!

WE HAVE TO WORK *TOGETHER* TO GET FRANK BACK!

DARLING, I--

WE'RE PROBABLY GOING TO [redacted] TO STAGE AN ASSAULT ON *LATVERIA*! BEN, PLEASE TAKE JOHNNY AND CRYSTAL AND GET THE *FANTASTIJET* PREPARED!

FAST--!

[redacted] SUZIE! WE WUZ ONLY WAITIN' ON THE *BIG BRAIN* AN' THE TORCH'S DUMB ROBOT, ANYWAY!

WHEN *YOU* CAN CATCH FLYING ROBOTS, YOU LET ME KNOW, THING!

CATS CATCH *RATS*, KID, BUT NOBODY LIKES 'EM TO BRING 'EM *HOME*!

DARLING, THE *FF* WAS *ALREADY* UNDER A STRAIN BECAUSE OF JOHNNY AND BEN-- BUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH *YOU*?

[redacted] KNEW MORE ABOUT FRANK THAN I DO, SUE! HE'S SPENT *MORE* TIME ON HIM THAN I HAVE!

GOD HELP ME, WHAT KIND OF A FATHER *AM* I...?

PART 2

DOUBLE DEALING!

DADDY!

DADDY!

I HAVE [illegible] DAMPERS ON THIS SHIP FRANKLIN [illegible] YOU CANNOT SEND YOUR [illegible] SELF TO YOUR FATHER!

I SUGGEST YOU AWAKEN AND ENJOY THE RIDE!

...BAD MEN...

THE DAMPERS ARE ONLY FOR YOUR *OWN* PROTECTION, I ASSURE YOU! THERE ARE MANY ENTITIES IN THE WORLD WHO MIGHT ATTACK A YOUNG *BOY!*

MY DADDY AND MOMMY *LOVE* ME, DOC'OR DOOM! THEY'LL *BEAT* YOU--!

ALL FATHERS AND MOTHERS LOVE THEIR CHILDREN, FRANKLIN-- JUST AS THEIR *CHILDREN* LOVE THEM!

I LOVE *MY* MOTHER--

-- AND SHE WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM ME BY THE BAD MAN NAMED MEPHISTO!

MEPHISTO--?

...HE WAS A BAD MAN!

YES, AND HE IS THE ONE I MUST PROTECT YOU FROM!

I KNOW YOUR FATHER USES ME AS A BOGEY MAN FOR YOU -- "EAT YOUR TURNIPS OR DOCTOR DOOM WILL GET YOU," HE SAYS, PERHAPS--

--BUT ■ TRUTH, I AM THE BELOVED KING OF A FARAWAY LAND WHO IS SAD BECAUSE MEPHISTO TOOK MY MOTHER FROM ME--

--AND I NEED YOUR HELP!

GEE...

MEPHISTO TRIED TO TAKE MY MOMMY, AND MY DADDY AND ME! I THOUGHT I KILLED 'IM, BUT DADDY EXPLAINED HOW MEPHISTO ALWAYS COMES BACK LIKE WINTER!

BUT I KILLED 'IM FOR THEM!

I WILL HELP GET YOUR MOMMY BACK DOC'OR DOOM!

AN EMOTION PLAYS ACROSS THE BLOOD-SHOT MUDDY EYES OF THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK--

-- BUT ONLY HE KNOWS WHAT IT IS...!

MEANWHILE, BACK AT FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA--

BLESS SUE! IF SHE WEREN'T THERE TO MAKE ME LOOK AT MYSELF SOMETIMES--!

NOW MORE THAN EVER-- FRANK KIDNAPED, MY NOT BEING THE TEAM LEADER-- I HAVE TO MAKE BEN'S JOB *EASIER*, NOT *HARDER*!

HOW COULD CRYS COME BACK NOW HOW *COULD* SHE?

I HAD NO IDEA HOW DEEP THE DIVISION BETWEEN JOHNNY AND BEN WAS! I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT *MY* BEING HERE REALLY *MEANT*!

MAYBE I *SHOULDN'T* STAY--!

WHAT CAN DOOM HAVE [redacted] TO FRANK-- AND CAN WE BEAT IT WITH EVERYTHING SO *UN-SETTLED*?

BUT WHY HASN'T FRANK SENT [redacted] *SECOND* SELF BACK TO US YET?!

THEY ARE SOON LOST TO SIGHT.'

...BUT BACK AT *FOUR FREEDOMS* PLAZA--

--ALL IS NOT *QUIET* AND STILL...

EEEEE

IT ECHOES ALONG THE GLEAMING CORRIDORS--A LOW, BUT PENETRATING WHISTLE, THROBBING AT AN EERIE PITCH...

PHWEEEEEE

...AND CRUMPLED IN THE CORNER OF REED RICHARDS' LABORATORY-- THE *ROBOT* WHO STOLE FRANKLIN--

--RESPONDS ANEW...

PHWEEEEEEE!

EEEEEEOOOEEEEE

TAKE ME TO LATVERIA, K-137--AND PUT UP A MEAT SHIELD!

YES-- MASTER--!

THAT FOOL, RICHARDS THOUGHT HE COULD CAGE VICTOR VON DOOM, BUT HE SHOULD NOT HAVE LEFT YOU IN MY PRESENCE!

THE DAY IS COMING WHEN HE WILL LEARN THAT I AM HIS MASTER, AS WELL -- THE DAY HE DIES BENEATH MY ARMORED HANDS!

BUT-- ABOVE THE CLOUDS CAPPING NEW YORK CITY--

THERE HE GOES--!

I GOTTA HAND IT TO YA, STRETCH! SPOTTIN' THAT OVERRIDE CIRCUIT IN [redacted] ROBOT-- REMEMBERIN' THAT KRISTOFF KNEW'S EVERYTHING DOC DOOM KNOWS--!

UP TO A CERTAIN POINT, BEN-- BUT HE WAS MADE TO THINK HE'S DOOM BY A NUMBER OF ROBOTS; SO I GAMBLED THAT HE'D KNOW HOW TO OPERATE THE CIRCUIT!

NOW HE'LL ENTER LATVERIA, BYPASSING THE DEFENSES THE WAY DOOM WOULD-- AND WE JUST HAVE TO FOLLOW HIM [redacted]

YEAH! DOOM TOOK YOUR KID SO WE LIKE HIS KID AGAINST HIM!

I LIKE IT.

AT THAT MOMENT, IN DOOMSTADT, LATVERIA...

THE MASTER HAS RETURNED!

[illegible] TO MY KINGDOM, FRANKLIN. IS IT NOT THE VERY STUFF OF THE [illegible] GRIMM?

MY UNCA'S BENJAMIN GRIMM! ARE YOU TALKIN' 'BOUT HIM--?

NO, CHILD! DO NOT TELL ME YOUR FATHER HAS NEGLECTED YOUR EDUCATION IN THE POETS OF THE BALKANS--!

WELCOME, MASTER!

WHAT IS IT, NACHMANN?

WE DID NOT KNOW YOU WERE BRINGING A CHILD, MASTER. THE TEACHER--FRÄULEIN MUELLER--SHE IS HIKING IN THE MOUNTAINS--!

I HAVE NO PLAN TO TEACH THIS BOY, NACHMANN--

--BUT IF I HAD, FRÄULEIN MUELLER WOULD HAVE FAILED ME--SO SHE WILL PAY!

AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED FOR YOUR INFORMATION--WHEN I HAVE THE TIME!

NOW, BACK--ALL OF YOU! YOUR KING MUST ATTEND TO MATTERS FAR BEYOND YOUR COMPREHENSION!

COME, FRANKLIN--LET ME SHOW YOU MY CASTLE! NIGHT WILL BE UPON US SOON!

I WANT TO TALK TO MY DADDY FIRST! NOW THAT WE'RE OUT OF THE SHIP!

AH, FRANKLIN--I REGRET MOST DEEPLY THAT THE MENACE OF MEPHISTO GROWS EVER STRONGER AS THE DAYLIGHT DESERTS US!

I HAVE EVEN STRONGER DAMPERS SURROUNDING THIS CITY AND CANNOT SHUT THEM DOWN UNTIL THE MOMENT OF CONFRONTATION AT MIDNIGHT!

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED YOUR MIND ABOUT HELPING ME, HAVE YOU?

I-- I DON'T KNOW-- / I KNOW MEPHISTO'S REALLY [redacted] BUT I KEEP THINKING I SAW DOC[redacted] DOOM DO BAD STUFF TOO-- ONLY MAYBE IT WAS JUST A DREAM.

WE WERE ALL [redacted] PEOPLE SOMEHOW--!

FRANK'S REFERRING TO THE TIME DOOM TOOK CONTROL OF THE FF'S MINDS, PLACED THEM IN [redacted]TS, AND MADE THEM LIVE AS NON-SUPER-POWERED [redacted] IN "LIDDLE-VILLE" -- IN FF#236.

BUT LIKE ANY CHILD'S, HIS MEMORIES ARE SPOTTY--!

MY DREAMS OF THE FUTURE COME TRUE, BUT OTHER DREAMS AREN'T REAL, RIGHT?

I GUESS...OKAY! LET'S GO!

THE SUN SINKS BEHIND THE CLOISTERED PEAKS. THE DREAMS OF A MIDSUM-MER NIGHT BEGIN... AS DUSK PEAKS THROUGH-OUT EUROPE, THOSE WHO WOR-SHIP THE OLD RELIGION GATHER 'ROUND [redacted] BON-FIRES -- BUT THE VALLEYS LIE IN THAT MUCH DEEPER DARKNESS... ...AND IN THE [redacted] RIVER DOOM...

K-137 BARELY GOT ME HERE! I MUST RE-DESIGN THAT SERIES AT MY EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY--

--JUST AS SOON AS I DEAL WITH THE IMPOSTER!

AH! THERE IS THE HOUSE I SEEK!

A VISITOR WOULD THINK THIS EDIFICE MERELY A "TYPICAL LATVERIAN DWELLING"-- AND THE PEASANTS HAVE BEEN LED TO BELIEVE IT *HAUNTED*--

--SO THAT NO ONE *DISTURBS* ITS SILENT ABANDONMENT!

BUT WITHIN ITS MOLDERING EXTERIOR--

AND BEHIND ITS SELF-DUSTING *WALLS*--

--THE SECRETS OF *DOCTOR DOOM* WAIT PATIENTLY UPON HIS NEEDS!

BRAINSCAN CONFIRMS YOUR IDENTITY, MASTER! HOW MAY I SERVE YOU?

YOU WILL COME WITH ME, B-7B--AS WE ATTACK AND DESTROY A MADMAN WHO HAS INVADED MY DOMAIN!

IT IS STRANGE, MASTER--NONE OF THE *OTHER* ROBOTS HAS ALERTED ME TO AN INVASION!

THIS MAN IS UNDENIABLY CLEVER, B-7B! HE HAS CLEARLY CREATED A DEVICE TO *DECEIVE* THE BRAINSCAN FUNCTION! BUT I KNOW EVERY INCH OF MY COUNTRY AND ALL ITS ARCANE SECRETS--WHICH NO *OUTSIDER* EVER COULD--

--SO BEFORE THE MIDNIGHT HOUR HE WILL *RUE THE DAY* HE DECIDED TO MATCH WITS WITH THE *REAL DOCTOR DOOM!*

IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU IN YOUR NEW RAIMENT, MASTER!*

IT IS GOOD TO FEEL ITS WEIGHT UPON MY LIMBS! YOU B-SERIES ROBOTS MUST [redacted] RE-CONFIGURED IN THIS IMAGE, ONCE LATVERIA RETURNS TO NORMAL!

SO MUCH HAS GONE UN-DONE WHILE I REMAINED A PRISONER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR--

* WHICH KRISTOFF DONNED IN F.F. #278 -- RALF

--BUT WITH THE GREATER MENACE HERE AFOOT, I WILL PLAN MY REVENGE UPON RICHARDS' TEAM SOME OTHER TIME!

THEY NEED NOT CONCERN ME NOW!

BE VERY, VERY QUIET--!

WHEN I HAD THESE TUNNELS BUILT AS SECRET ESCAPES FROM CASTLE DOOM, EVEN I COULD NOT HAVE IMAGINED THAT I WOULD ONE DAY USE THEM TO SECRETLY ENTER MY KEEP!

CERTAINLY NO ONE ELSE COULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM IN THAT WAY, FOR ONLY I KNOW HOW TO DE-ACTIVATE THE DEVICES WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE BAR OUR PASSAGE!

HOLD!

MASTER--?

THE FANTASTIC FOUR LEFT AMERICA *BEFORE* ME, GO WHERE ARE THEY?

I MUST *RE-ARM* THE LAST DEVICE TO MAKE CERTAIN THEY CANNOT--

--FOLLOW--

CAPTIVITY MUST HAVE DULLED MY WITS! I'VE BEEN GULLED AS EASILY AS A CHILD!

BUT IT IS NOT TOO LATE--!

HE'S SEEN US! GET BACK!!

GET BACK *WHERE*? WE'RE TRAPPED AT *BOTH ENDS* O' THE TUNNEL!

KRISTOFF, WAIT! WE HAVE THE SAME GOAL NOW!

WE WANT THE *OTHER* DOOM, TOO!

YOUR APPEAL WOULD HAVE MORE *IMPACT* IF YOU DID NOT PRETEND NOT TO KNOW MY NAME, RICHARD!

BONG!

HARK! DO YOU *HEAR*? THE TOWER TOLLS FOR *MIDNIGHT!*

MOTHER--!

OKAY, BENJY-- YOU'RE THE *BOSS!* HOW DO WE GET OUTTA THIS?

WE *WILL* GET OUT, JOHNNY!

WE *HAVE* TO!

AN' I'VE GOT ME ONE IDEA TA *TRY*, KID--!

BONG!

YES, YES, BORIS! THIS YEAR I AM *FULLY* PREPARED

MASTER! IT IS *TIME!*

WOW! THAT'S REALLY *AWESOME!*

BUT I SURE WISH MIDNIGHT WOULD COME--! THIS IS *WAY* PAST MY *BEDTIME*...!

BONG

THERE ARE ALARMS BELOW, MASTER! INTRUDERS IN THE TUNNELS!

BOOM!

THE DEFENSES OF DOCTOR DOOM ARE MORE PERSUASIVE THAN THOSE OF R--

--OF THE ONES WHO I EXPECT HAVE COME TO MEDDLE!

BONG!

NOW IS THE TIME, FRANKLIN RICHARDS! NOW IS THE TIME WHEN THE LIFE OF MY MOTHER LIES IN YOUR SMALL HANDS!

BOOM!

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT MY MOTHER MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME NOW! I CANNOT-- I WILL NOT FAIL HER AGAIN!

I RELY ON YOU, FRANK!

--YES, DOCTOR DOOM!

BOOM!

NOW, LET US SHAKE HANDS LIKE MEN AND GO FORWARD INTO WAR.

--MY GALLANT COMRADE--!

BONG!

BONG!

BEELZEBUB... SATAN... BAPHOMET... THOU...

MEPHISTO...

I CALL YOU UP FROM YOUR PIT BELOW...

BONG!

...IN THE NAME OF DOOM I CALL YOU UP...!

I HAVE CONQUERED PRINCE NAMOR OF ATLANTIS- I HAVE CONQUERED THE SIL[redacted] SURFER OF ALIEN ZENN-LA---

BONG!

--HEED MY COMMAND AND COME..

--COME TO DOOM!

BONINGING

ONCE MORE YOU CALL US, VICTOR VON DOOM--

--AND ONCE MORE-- YOU SHALL FAIL!

NO, MEPHISTO-- THIS TIME I SHALL BE VICTOR-- IN FACT AS WELL AS NAME!

I AM PREPARED!

FRANKLIN! GIVE ME YOUR HAND--!

NOW, BOY!

DOC'R DOOM! PSSST! THE DAMPERS ARE STILL ON! YOU FORGOT--

I FORGET NOTHING!

EVIL ONE-- I AM PREPARED..

--TO GIVE YOU THE SOUL OF YOUR ENEMY IN EXCHANGE FOR THE SOUL OF MY MOTHER!

DOUBLE DOWN!

PART 3

THE SOUL OF FRANKLIN RICHARDS, THE CHILD WHO ONCE QUENCHED THE FIRE THAT [redacted] ME--

--IN [redacted] FOR A [redacted] WHOSE SPIRIT I HOLD ONLY TO TORMENT YOU!

YESSSSSS!

GIVE HIM TO ME, DOOM! I HAVE HAD MY FUN WITH YOUR MOTHER!

BUT THE DAMPER THINGS ARE STILL ON! HOW CAN YOU BE HERE, BAD MAN?

THE DAMPERS MEAN NOTHING TO ME, AND NEVER DID--

WHAT IS THIS?!

WHA-ARRGH!!

BZZT

THERE HE IS ROBOTS--THE IMPOSTER WHO INVADED MY REALM!

WE HAVE WAYS OF LEARNING SECRETS IN LATVERIA, MASKED ONE! YOU WILL TELL ME WHAT *DARK CONSPIRACY* LURKS BEHIND YOUR MAD ACTS TONIGHT!

ONLY THEN WILL YOU DIE FOR SEEKING TO *DEFILE* MY MOTHER'S SOUL!!

YOU *FOOL!* YOU *IMBECILE!* DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE *DONE!?!*

THAT- THAT'S THE KID DADDY WAS TRYING TO *HELP!*

OH, DADDY...! IF *ONLY* I COULD GET TO YOU!

MY MOTHER WAS *SAFE!* SHE MAY *YET* BE [redacted] IF YOU DELAY ME NO LONGER!

YOU--! RICHARDS--! ALL MY ENEMIES, CONSPIRING TO DRIVE ME MAD BY UNDERMINING MY *IDENTITY!*

THAT PITIABLE *PLOY* MIGHT WORK WITH LESSER MEN, BUT *NOT* AGAINST THE MIND AND WILL OF *DOCTOR DOOM!*

B-7B--!! BECAUSE THE MASTER HAS TRANSFERRED HIS MIND TO *OTHER* BODIES ON OCCASION, WE ARE PROGRAMMED TO KNOW HIM BY *BRAINSCAN ALONE*-- YET *BOTH BRAINS* SCAN *ALIKE!*

THE SMALL ONE MAY BE KRISTOFF-- TO WHOM WE *GAVE* THE MASTER'S MIND-- BUT WE CANNOT BE *CERTAIN* NOW!

THERE IS NO *PROGRAMMING* FOR THIS EVENT!

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND, EITHER--

-- BUT *MEPHISTO* CAN TURN *ALL* TO HIS ADVANTAGE!

I SHALL TAKE REED RICHARDS' *SON*-- AND *KEEP* VON DOOM'S DEAR MOTHER!

OH, NO, YA DON'T, BIG RED!

KROM!

THE F.F. HAVE LANDED!

YOUR DEFENSES ARE DESIGNED TO WORK ON PEOPLE IN YOUR TUNNELS, DOOM!

BUT WITH THE *THING*, WE WERE ABLE TO *SMASH* OUR WAY OUT!

MEPHISTO HAS *FRANK!* DOOM MUST HAVE SURROUNDED US WITH *PSYCHIC DAMPERS*, OR ELSE FRANK COULD BREAK FREE!

BUT I HAVE THE *REMEDY*--!

EVERYONE! COVER ME TILL I REACH FRANK!

BROTHERS! THAT IS *REED RICHARDS*, THE *PRIMARY FOE!*

DON'T WORRY REED! I CAN HOLD A *SCREEN* AGAINST THEIR BLASTS!

AND *I'LL* HAND 'EM A FEW BLASTS *BACK!*

WHEN I'M FULLY IN CHARGE, WE'RE NOT GONNA BE AS NICE TA YA AS WE HAVE BEEN, DOOM!

REED RESPECT'S YA, BUT TA ME, YOU 'N' YER ROBOTS'RE JUST A PAIN IN THE BUTT!

WHAK

THE ROBOTS ARE POWERED BY PLUTONIUM! IT'S CHILD'S PLAY FOR AN ELEMENTAL TO SHUT DOWN THE REACTION!

MEPHISTO'S DISAPPEARING--

--TAKING FRANK TO HIS DIMENSION!

WORM-HOLE CLOSING--!

SN

AP

REED!

HE AIN'T GOT NO PROTECTION--!

THE ARCANE FORCES OF THE NETHER-REALM CONFOUND MY EVERY MOVE---

CAN'T HOLD MY BODY TOGETHER---!

BUT I HAVE TO--I HAVE TO--

--FOR MY SON!"

"THIS STORY OCCURS BEFORE THE EPIC EVENTS IN THE **MEPHISTO LIMITED SERIES**---LIMITED RALF.

NOW, BOY--NOW YOU'RE IN **MY** WORLD--!

MEPHISTO--!! IF YOU WANT A **SOUL**, TAKE **MINE!**

YOU HUMANS **DISGUST ME!** YOU HAVE NO POWER TO BARGAIN WITH **HERE!**

I'LL TAKE **YOUR** SOUL **AND** YOUR SON'S!

BUT **FIRST**, I'LL BIND YOU AND FORCE YOU TO **WATCH** AS I RIP THE BOY **APART!**

=UHHHNN!=

SO-- **STUNNED** YOU, HAVE I--?

DADDY'S JUST **PRETENDING!**

YEAAAA!

AND DADDY'S MACHINE--! IT [illegible]D MY POWER!

I CAN HURT MEPHISTO AGAIN!

THE CHILD--!

THE CHILD [illegible] FILLED WITH LIGHT!

BUT I HAVE LIGHT AS WELL--THE LURID LIGHT OF FEAR AND FIRE--!

I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU, BAD MAN!

MY LIGHT--COOLS AND SHRIVELS BEFORE HIS--!

SUDDENLY, THE LORD OF EVIL RISES TO MOUNTAINOUS HEIGHT--!

I AM MEPHISTO--LORD OF THE UNDER-WORLD!

WHEREVER DARK EMOTIONS FLARE, THERE DO I SET MY FIRES--

--AND ALL WHO CALL THEMSELVES HUMAN FEAR MY TOUCH--

--BUT NOT THIS CHILD!

NOT THIS CURSED CHILD!!!

BEGONE FROM ME, THEN! I CAN COUNTENANCE NO MORE!

SUDDENLY, THE AIR AROUND REED AND FRANK GROWS CRISP AND COOL--THE RED WORLD DIMS--

--BUT DO THEIR EYES IN THAT MOMENT SPY A FRAIL FEMALE FORM ON THE HORIZON--?

--OR IS IT JUST A TRICK OF THE FADING, FITFUL FIRE..?

THEY'RE BACK! BEN, THEY'RE BACK!

BACK TO A WORLD GROWN CALMER I SEE!

FRANKLIN RICHARDS-- YOU FAILED TO BRING MY *MOTHER* WITH YOU!

YOU *LIED* TO ME, DOC'OR DOOM! YOU ASKED ME TO *HELP* YOU, BUT YOU'RE AS BAD AS *MEPHISTO*--

-- AS BAD AS DADDY *SAID* YOU WERE!

WELL, I'M GONNA USE MY *POWER* TO PUT YOU WHERE WE JUST *CAME FROM!*

FRANK! NO!

BUT HE TRIED TO *HURT* ME, DADDY! HE TRIED TO HURT *ALL OF US!*

I KNOW, FRANK, BUT *NO ONE* DESERVES TO BE SENT TO *MEPHISTO!*

BUT DADDY—! I--I—

--I WAS SO *SCARED!*

I TRIED TO BE BRAVE LIKE *YOU*, BUT I COULDN'T MAKE MY *HEAD* WORK, AN' I COULDN'T *TALK* TO YOU, AN'--

OH, DADDY! THANKYOU FOR *SAVING ME!*

YOU *NEVER* HAVE TO THANK ME [redacted] *THAT*, FRANK!

I COULDN'T DO *ANYTHING* ELSE!

PART 4

DOUBLE PLAY!

AND NOW, ANOTHER MIDSUMMER'S EVE HAS PASSED ME BY--!

DO NOT DESPAIR, MOTHER! NEXT YEAR, I WILL BE STRONGER--!

NEXT YEAR, I WILL HAVE A NEW PLAN!

REED-- KRISTOFF SOUNDS AS SINCERE AS DOOM!

CAN'T ANYTHING BE DONE TO GIVE THE BOY BACK HIS RIGHT MIND?!

YOU, BOY-- I GAVE YOU PRIVILEGE IN MY REALM! YOUR MOTHER DIED WHILE UNDER MY PROTECTION, AND SO I SAW TO YOUR EVERY NEED!*

BUT YOUR TIME OF PRIVILEGE IS FINISHED! NOW YOU WILL PAY FOR THE CHAOS OF THIS NIGHT!

* SEE FF #258 — REF.

NO, DOOM-- THERE'S NO ONE TO BLAME FOR THIS BUT YOURSELF!

DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU KIDNAPPED HIM, FRANK COULD HAVE BEATEN MEPHISTO AND SAVED YOUR MOTHER--

-BUT YOU BE-TRAYED HIM, AND THREW AWAY YOUR ONLY CHANCE!

BUT I COULD NOT TRULY PLACE MY TRUST IN ANOTHER-- NOT WHEN I, MYSELF, HAVE ALWAYS FAILED!

I COULD NOT DO THAT, RICHARDS!

AND IN THAT REGARD-- PERHAPS I AM AS MUCH OF A PRISONER AS MY MOTHER--!

B-16! THAT ONE ADMITS A FAILURE OF WILL!

HE SPEAKS AS IF EMOTION FOR A WOMAN SHOULD EXCUSE IT--

-- BUT THAT MUST BE THE FALSE DOCTOR DOOM!

WHAT?! GET BACK, ROBOTS!

GET BACK! YOUR MASTER COMMANDS!

THEY PAY YOU NO HEED, IMPOSTER! THE TRUTH IS REVEALED AT LAST!

THE FANTASTIC FOUR WILL FEEL THE LASH OF MY WRATH FOR AIDING YOU IN YOUR SCHEMES AFTER I HAVE HAD THE TIME TO RESUME FULL CONTROL OF MY BELOVED LAND--

-- BUT YOU DIE NOW!

THIS IS MADNESS! UTTER MADNESS!

I AM THE TRUE DOCTOR DOOM! USE YOUR BRAINSCANS, ROBOTS!

YOU HAVE DECEIVED US LONG ENOUGH! THIS IS YOUR FINISH CONSPIRATOR!

NOTHING WILL FINISH DOOM!

DOOM DESTROYED THEM ALL -- BUT THEY WERE ALMOST AS POWERFUL AS HE!

LOOK! HIS ARMOR IS DAMAGED!

THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF ROBOTS IN THIS CASTLE! I CANNOT FIGHT THEM ALL IF THEY ARE TURNED AGAINST ME!

THAT'S RIGHT, TRAITOR-- MAKE YOUR PUERILE EXCUSES-- AS YOU FLEE!

KRUMP!

DOOM DOES NOT FLEE, BOY! YOU HAVE ME AT A DISADVANTAGE, AND I CHOOSE TO ASSESS MY NEXT MOVE CAREFULLY--

BUT THE WAR 'TWIXT YOU AND ME HAS JUST BEGUN!

INCREDIBLE! DOOM OVERWHELMED BY THE VERY FORCES HE BUILT TO INSURE HIS FINAL VICTORY--!

HIS ROBOTS, DESIGNED TO ACT IN HIS STEAD WHEN NECESSARY--AND THE CHILD HE GAVE HIS MIND TO, TO CARRY HIS SCHEMES ONWARD WHEN HE WAS GONE!

WELL, HE'S GONE NOW--!

ROBOTS! ALERT ALL OF YOUR SERIES, THEN THE LESSER RANKS!

SPREAD THE WORD THROUGHOUT THE LAND AND TO ALL THE EMBASSIES IN THE WIDER WORLD!

THAT MAN MUST BE BROUGHT BACK TO FACE MY JUSTICE!

I DON'T SUPPOSE IT WOULD DO ANY GOOD TO TELL YOU ONCE MORE THAT YOU'RE NOT DOCTOR DOOM!

YOU SHOULD LISTEN WHEN YOUR BETTERS SPEAK, RICHARDS! I HAVE ALREADY SAID YOU WILL NOT CONCERN ME FOR SOME TIME!

YOU MAY LEAVE MY PRESENCE NOW--BUT BE QUICK ABOUT IT!

DOCTOR DOOM HAS MUCH TO DO!

YER BUGGIN' OUT AS HEAD HONCHO'A THIS TEAM AT A GOOD TIME, REED! THE WORLD'S GONE NUTS!

I HAVE NO DOUBT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH IT, OLD FRIEND--!

--BECAUSE NO MATTER WHO'S IN CHARGE, AND NO MATTER WHO OR HOW MANY MAKE UP THE REST OF THE TEAM--

--NO ONE WILL EVER BEAT THE--

Fantastic Four

ON ONE WEEK--FANTASTIC FOUR #306 INTRODUCES THEIR FINAL NEW MEMBER, AND THEIR NEW AGE KICKS INTO EVEN HIGHER GEAR! HOW COULD IT BE OTHERWISE--IN THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE?!